Message Text

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R 181511Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1694

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

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PASS AGRICULTURE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR UK EEC

SUBJECT: UK HOUSE OF COMMONS DEBATE ON EC AGRICULTURE PROPOSALS

BEGIN SUMMARY: COMMONS DEBATED MARCH 16 EC AGRICULTURAL PRICE PROPOSALS. DEBATE PROVIDED AGRICULTURE MINISTER SILKIN WITH STRONG SUPPORT FROM LABOUR BENCHES TO SPELL OUT YET AGAIN HIS HOSTILITY TO ALL COMMUNITY PROPOSALS INVOLVING COMMODITIES IN SURPLUS. AMENDMENT MOVED BY PROMINENT LABOUR ANTI-MARKETEER DOUGLAS JAY URGING HMG UNCLASSIFIED

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TO ALLOW EASIER ACCESS FOR CHEAPER FOODSTUFFS FROM THIRD COUNTR.IES WAS ACCEPTED BY SILKIN. MINISTER AND MP'S ON ALL SIDES CONTINUED DEFENCE OF UK MARKETING BOARDS. NEW CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY STUDY MEANWHILE SUPPORTS JAY VIEWPOINT AND SAYS UK BOP COST OF CAP IS 600 MILLION POUNDS PER YEAR. UK HAS INCREASED GUARANTEE PAYMENTS ON FAT SHEEP AND WOOL. END SUMMARY.

- 1. ON MARCH 16 COMMONS DEBATED COMMUNITY AGRICULTURAL PROPOSALS ON MOTION MOVED BY AGRICULTURE MIRISTER SILKIN "THE HOUSE WELCOMES THE GOVERNMENT'S INTENTION TO NEGOTIATE A SETTLEMENT WHICH, TAKING INTO ACCOU'T I-TERESTS OF CONSUMERS AS WELL AS PRODUCERS. HELPS SECURE A BETTER BALANCE OF THE MARKET, PARTICULARLY IN THOSE SECTORS WITH A STRUCTURAL SURPLUS; AND ENDORSES GOVERNMENT'S VIEW THAT DECISIONS ON WHETHER COMMISSION PROPOSALS FOR CHANGES IN A MEMBER STATE'S REPRESENTATION RATE SHOULD BE ACCEPTED ARE ORIMARILY A MATTER FOR THAT MEMBER STATE."
- 2. SILKIN CLAIMED UK'S SITUATION WAS DISTINCT FROM OTHER EIGHT BECAUSE OF IMPOSSIBILITY OF 100 PERCENT SELF-SUFFICIENCY. UK'S AIM SHOULD BE TO PRESERVE A PRICE LEVEL MORE AKIR TO TRADITIONAL REQUIREMENTS AND TO PUT AN END TO STRUCTURAL FOOD SURPLUSES. THE CAP HAUNTS BRITAIN WITH TWIN EVILS OF EXCESSIVE PRICES AND MOUNTAINS OF STORED FOOD WHICH THEY COULD NOT HAVE.
- 3. WHILE COMPLETION OF TWO TRANSITIONAL STEPS WOULD GIVE REASONABLE RETURN TO UK FARMERS, THEY WILL CAUSE A 2 PENCE IN THE POUND AVERAGE PRICE RISE IN HOUSEWIVES' FOOD BILLS. BUTTER WILL GO UP FOR EXAMPLE BY 12 OR 13 PENCE PER LB. OVER PRESENT 52-56 PENCE MARK. OTHER FOODS WHICH WILL BE AFFECTED INCLUDE CHEESE, EGGS AND BREAD. WHILE COMMISSION'S PRESENT PRICE PROPOSALS MIGHT SEEM MODERATE TO REST OF COMMUNITY, NATIONAL PRESSURES UNCLASSIFIED

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AND PROBLEMS IN UK CALLED FOR CLOSE EXAMINATION OF THEM. IN MILK SECTOR, INEFFICIENT PRODUCTION SHOULD BE CUT BACK BUT ENCOURAGED WHERE IT WAS EFFICIENT AND PRICES RESTRAINED SO THAT FURTHER SURPLUSES WERE NOT CREATED. EC BUTTER MOUNTAIN WAS OVER 200,000 TONS AND SKIM MILK POWDER SURPLUS OVER ONE MILLION TONS AND BOTH STILL GROWING (INTERVENTION STOCKS OF THESE COMMODITIES IN UK ON MARCH 4 AMOUNTED TO ONLY 1,928 TONS AND 2,806 TONS RESPECTIVELY). MARKETING BOARDS WERE NOT MENTIONED IN CURRENT COMMUNITY PROPOSALS. UK COULD NOT CONTEMPLATE GIVING THEM UP. IN OTHER COUNTRIES WHERE NO DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM SIMILAR TO UK'S EXISTED, CONSUMPTION HAD FALLEN CONSIDERABLY; IN THE NETHERLANDS IT WAS DOWN BY 40 PERCENT.

4. SILKIN ATTACKED COMMISSION PROPOSALS TO PUT LEVY OR ISOGLUCOSE. "WE SHOULD NOT TAKE A LUDDITE ATTITUDE ON THESE THINGS." SILKIN HERE IS REITERATING POINTS BEING FORCIBLY MADE AT PRESENT BY COMPANY HEADS ENGAGED IN

ISOGLUCOSE INVESTMENT, INCLUDING TATE & LYLE, WHO ARE OUTRAGED BY MOVES TO RESTRICT ISOGLUCOSE PRODUCTION AND DEMAND.

5. AGAIN ON PRICES, SILKIN SAID FARMERS MUST UNDERSTAND

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R 181511Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1695

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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THAT HIGH PRICES ARE NOT ENTIRELY IN FARMERS' INTERESTS AND SAID IT WAS NO GOOD PRODUCING GOODS FOR STORE; THEY SHOULD BE PRODUCED FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION. WE HAVE TO BALANCE THE LEGITIMATE NEEDS OF THE PRODUCER WITH THE NECESSITY TO PROVIDE FOOD FOR THE HOUSEWIFE AT PRICES SHE CAN AFFORD. HE DREW ATTENTION TO THE LOBBYING THIS WEEK IN BRUSSELS OF EUROPEAN CONSUMERS' ASSOCIATION.

6. ON GREEN POUND DEVALUATION, SILKIN SAID HMG DID NOT

TAKE A DOGMATIC VIEW. THE GREEN POUND STAND HAD BEEN OF ENORMOUS BENEFIT TO CONSUMERS. HE DID NOT NOW OBJECT TO UNCLASSIFIED

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A MODEST DEVALUATION BUT TOTAL ELIMINATION OF GAP BETWEEN GREEN RATE AND MARKET VALUE OF STERLING WOULD BE RUINOUS. UK REMAINS COMMITTED TO THE VIEW THAT IT IS THE NATIONAL CONCERN OF EACH MEMBER STATE TO DECIDE IN THE LIGHT OF ITS ECONOMY WHEN, IF AT ALL, IT PROPOSES A CHANGE IN THE VALUE OF ITS GREEN CURRENCY. PROPOSED CHANGE IN GREEN POUND WAS 5.94 PERCENT. THIS WOULD ADD 6.32 PERCENT TO STERLING VALUE OF CAP SUPPORT ORICES ARD ABOUT 1.25 PERCENT TO RETAIL FOOD PRICES. THE 3 PERCENT RISE PROPOSED IN CAP PRICES FOR 1977-78 WOULD ADD A FURTHER 0.75 PERCENT TO THE FOOD PRICE RISE (THESE INCREASES ARE OF COURSE ADDITIONAL TO THOSE RESULTING FROM ENDING OF TRANSITION). SUMMING UP, SILKIN SAID AIM MUST BE TO SEE THAT PRODUCERS RECEIVE A LIVING, AND A GOOD LIVING, WHILE SAFEGUARDING THE INTERESTS OF THE CONSUMER BY THE MAXIMUM RESTRAINT UPON PRICES. A BASIC IMPROVEMENT IR THE WORKINGS OF THE CAP, PARTICULARLY IN RELATION TO STRUCTURAL SURPLUSES WAS NECESSARY.

7. LEADING LABOUR ANTI-MARKETEER DOUGLAS JAY MOVED AN AMENDMENT TO GOVERNMENT MOTION URGING PRESSURE FOR EASIER ACCESS IRTO THE UK FOR EFFICIENTLY PRODUCED FOODST.FFS FROM THIRD COUNTRIES. JAY'S MOTION ALSO OPPOSED COMMI-SSION PROPOSALS ON USE OF BUTTER FAT AND MILK PROTEINS, THE PROPOSED LEVY ON ISOGLUCOSE AND THE TAX ON VEGETABLE AND MARINE FATS AND OILS. JAY SAID MORE PEOPLE WERE BEGINNING TO REALISE THE EXTENT OF THE DAMAGE WHICH HAD BEEN DONE BY CAP. DAMAGE WAS NOW SO GREAT THAT MERE TINKERING AND MERE TALK OF REFORM WERE NO LONGER ENOUGH. UK SHOULD DECLARE THAT URLESS THERE WERE DRASTIC REFORMS SOON THEY WOULD BREAK FREE FROM CAP ALTOGETHER. EC PRICES FOR VIRTUALLY EVERY STANDARD FOOD ITEM WERE NOW FAR ABOVE WORLD PRICES AND PROPAGANDA THAT THE ERA OF CHEAP FOOD HAD ENDED FOREVER HAD BEEN PROVED TO BE YET ANOTHER DECEPTION. JAY WARNED PARTICULARLY ABOUT THREATENING EC SUGAR SURPLUS SITUATION. JAY'S MOTION UNCLASSIFIED

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WAS ACCEPTED BY SILKIN WHO SAID HMG HAD ALREADY BEGUN A PROCESS FOR EASIER ACCESS INTO UK OF EFFICIENTLY PRODUCED FOODSTUFFS FROM THIRD COUNTRIES.

- 8. MOST OPPOSITION SPEAKERS IN DEBATE CONFINED THEIR CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT STANCE TO GREEN POUND QUESTION. MAIN CONSERVATIVE AGRICULTURE SPOKESMAN JOHN PEYTON CRITICISED SILKIN FOR NOT USING GREEN POUND SITUATION MORE EFFECTIVELY TO BRING ABOUT THE RECALCULATION OF PIGMEAT MCA'S WHICH WERE STILL, HE CLAIMED. CRIPPLING UK PIG INDUSTRY DESPITE CURRENT SPECIAL PIG SUBSIDY OF ABOUT 3 POUNDS PER HEAD. PEYTON ALSO WONDERED IF, IN SOME REGARDS, BUTTER MOUNTAIN PROBLEM WAS BEING OVER-EXAGGERATED. HE SAID THAT IT REPRESENTED ONLY ABOUT 2 LBS. PER HEAD OF COMMUNITY POPULATION. NEVERTHELESS, HE ATTACKED SUBSIDISED BUTTER EXPORTS TO EASTERN EUROPE AND SOVIET UNION AS TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE. HE STRESSED, HOWEVER, CONSERVATIVE AGREEMENT WITH HMG ON THE MARKETING BOARDS ISSUE. HE SAID THE COMMISSION WOULD BE WELL ADVISED TO ADDRESS THEMSELVES TO THE OROBLEM OF ELIMINATING UNWANTED SURPLUSES BEFORE THEY TOOK DAMAGIRG ACTION TO INTERFERE WITH MEANS OF MARKETING WHICH HAD BEEN EVOLVED AND TRIED OVER MANY YEARS. PEYTON ASS-MED COMMISSION REGARDED CURRENT PROPOSALS AS SOMETHING OF A OACKAGE DEAL BUT IT WAS CLEAR THAT THEY WERE GOING TO PLEASE NO-ONE. EUROPEAN MILK PRODUCERS FOR EXAMPLE WERE NOT GOING TO LIKE IT AT ALL ALTHOUGH FOR THE UK THE PACKAGE MIGHT BE A USEFUL ASSISTANCE IN THE ELIMIRATION OF HIGH COST MILK ORODUCERS.
- 9. LIBERAL SPOKESMAN ON AGRICULTURE GERAINT HOWELLS SAID MAJOR CHANGE IN THE CAP WAS REQUIRED WITHIN THE NEXT TWELVE MONTHS IF AGRICULTURE IN BRITAIN WERE TO SURVIVE.
- 10. MOST OTHER SPEECHES IN THE DEBATE TENDED TO REFLECT CONSTITUENCY INTERESTS AS WELL AS POLITICAL PHILOSOPHIES UNCLASSIFIED

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OF MEMBERS. CONSERVATIVES FROM FARMING AREAS SPOKE OF

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R 181511Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1696

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FARMERS' FRUSTRATIONS BECAUSE OF GREEN POUND DISPARITY WHILE LABOUR SPEAKERS, PARTICULARLY LEFT-WINGERS, SPOKE OF OPEN-ENDED SUBSIDIES TO SECTIONAL INTERESTS AND OF DAMAGE TO UK FOOD CONSUMPTIOR. LABOUR LEFT-WINGER JOAN MAYNARD SAID LESS BUTTER. EGGS AND MEAT AND OTHER PROTEIN FOODS WERE BEING BOUGHT AND IT WAS NOT GOOD FOR HEALTH OF BRITISH PEOPLE THAT THEY SHOULD BE EATING LESS OF THEM. (MAFF HAS RELEASED NET PROVISIONAL PER CAPITA FOOD CONSUMPTION FIGURES FOR 1976 SHOWING 12 PERCENT FALL IN BEEF CONSUMPTION FROM 1975, 11 PERCENT DROP IN BUTTER CONSUMPTION AND 3 PERCENT FALL IN CHEESE UNCLASSIFIED

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CONSUMPTION ALTHOUGH EGG CONSUMPTION ROSE 2 PERCENT).

11. MEANWHILE UK HAS ANNOUNCED INCREASES IN GUARANTEE PRICES OF FAT SHEEP AND WOOL. THE GUARANTEE PRICE FOR FAT SHEEP AND LAMBS IN THE 1977-78 MARKETING YEAR (BEGINNING MARCH 28) WILL BE 115 PENCE PER KG. OR 52.2 PENCE PER LB. THIS IS AN INCREASE OF 16 PERCENT ABOVE THE GUARANTEE PRICE APPLICABLE FOR THE LAST 3 MONTHS OF 1976-77 OF 99.2 PENCE CONSISTING OF THE 1976 ANNUAL REVIEW AWARD OF 92.6 PENCE PER KG. PLUS THE ADDITION OF THE EXTRA DROUGHT RELIEF AWARD OF 6.6 PENCE PER KG.

- 12. THE 1977-78 WOOL GUARANTEE WILL BE 110 PENCE PER KG. OR 49.9 PENCE PER LB., AN INCREASE OF 13 OERCENT ABOVE THE 1976 GUARANTEE.
- 13. NO SIGNIFICANT. IF ANY. OUTLAY IN THE FORM OF DEFICIENCY PAYMENTS IS EXPECTED IR 1977-78 IR VIEW OF CONTINUING HIGH MARKET PRICES FOR BOTH FAT LAMBS AND WOOL. AVERAGE MARKET PRICE OF FAT LAMBS IN WEEK ENDING MARCH 9, 1977 WAS 164.2 PENCE PER KG.
- 14. BOTH NATIONAL FARMERS' UNION ARD 3RITISH WOOL MARKETING 3OARD OFFICIALS WARMLY WELCOME GUARARTEE PRICE RISES. NFU SAID THEY WOULD HELP THE EXPANSION IR SHEEP PRODUCTION WHICH BOTH GOVERNMENT AND FARMERS WISH TO SEE.
- 15. SHEEP ARD WOOL GUARANTEES TOGETHER WITH POTATOES ARE THE SOLE SURVIVORS FROM THE FORMER UK AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SYSTEM OF GUARANTEE PRICES AND DEFICIENCY PAYMERTS; PRICES OF ALL OTHER PREVIOUSLY SUPPORTED COMMODITIES NOW FALL UNDER CAP. FARMERS STILL AWAIT ANNOUNCEMENT ON 1977-78 POTATO GUARANTEE, DELAY ON WHICH IS REPORTED TO BE DUE TO TREASURY HESITATION OVER AMOUNT OF FURDS WHICH WOULD BE REQUIRED TO QIVE BIG IRCREASE WHICH FARMERS EXPECT AND MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE WOULD UNCLASSIFIED

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LIKE TO GIVE.

COMMERT:

16. IT SHOULD NOW BE ABUNDANTLY CLEAR FROM THIS AND FROM LONDON 2858 AND LONDON 3658 THAT UK HOSTILITY TO THE CAP IN GENERAL IS BECOMING EVER STRONGER AND MORE WIDE-SPREAD. DOUGLAS JAY'S VIEWS ECHO A WIDELY HELD FEELIRG HEE. A FEELIRG WWICH HAS BEEN MUCH INTENSIFIED BY THE EXPORT OF SUBSIDISED BUTTER TO THE SOVIET UNION, BY CONTINUING UNCERTAINTIES ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE MILK MARKETING BOARD, BY THE PROPOSED TAX ON ISOGLUCOSE AND BY THE GROWING ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT FOR THE TIME BEING AT LEAST MANY WORLD FOOD PRICES ARE CONSIDERABLY LOWER THAN THOSE UNDER THE CAP EVEN WITHOUT THE PRICE PROPOSALS CURRENTLY BEING CONSIDERED AND WITHOUT THE ADDITIONAL PRICE INCREASES INVOLVED IN THE PHASING OUT

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R 181511Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1697

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PASS AGRICULTURE

OF UK ACA'S AS TRANSITION ENDS ARD WITH EVEN A MODEST GREEN POUND DEVALUATION. OF SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE ARE THE ATTACKS BEING MOUNTED BY LEADING FIGURES ARD ORGANISATIONS IN THE FOOD PROCESSING AND MARKETING INDUSTRIES WHICH ARE NOW ADDING THEIR NOT INCONSIDERABLE WEIGHT OF INFLUENCE TO THE ALREADY STRONG PRESSURES AGAINST THE INFLATIONARY ASPECTS OF THE CAP.

17. OF PARTICULAR INTEREST IN THE CONTEXT OF WORLD PRICES AS AGAINST CAP PRICES, DETAILS WERE RELEASED TODAY OF A STUDY CARRIED OUT BY WYNNE GODLEY, DIRECTOR UNCLASSIFIED

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OF CAMBRIDGE URIVERSITY'S DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED ECONOMICS AND MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERSITY'S DEPARTMENT OF LAND ECONOMY. THE STUDY HAS ATTEMPTED TO IDENTIFY FACTORS BEARING ON BOP AND PRICE EFFECTS OF THE CAP. THE STUDY CALCULATES THAT COMBIRED EFFECT OF PRICE

INCREASES FORCED ON THE UK THROUGH THE ENDING OF TRANSITION AND THE PROPOSED GREEN OOUND DEVALUATION TOGETHER WITH CURRENT CAP PRICE PROPOSALS WOULD RAISE UK FOOD PRICES BY 10 PERCENT AND IMPOSE AR EXTRA 250 MILLION OOUND BURDEN ON THE BOP. EVEN WITHOUT THESE PROJECTED ORICE INCREASES THE STUDY CALCULATES THAT THE CAP IS ALREADY COSTING THE UK BOP ABOUT 600 MILLION POURDS PER YEAR MORE THAN IF BRITAIN WERE FREE TO BUY ON WORLD MARKETS. THE STUDY CALCULATES BOP EFFECTS BY TAKING ACCOUNT OF CAP PRICES. HMG'S RET CONTRIBUTION TO THE EC AGRICULTURAL BUDGET, COST OF FOOD IMPORTS FROM ALL SO-RCES LESS WHAT THE COST CO THOSE IMPORTS WOULD BE IF BRITAIN WERE FREE TO BUY ON WORLD MARKETS. THE STUDY WILL BE PUBLISHED IN FULL NEXT WEEK.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X

Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am Channel Indicators: n/a

Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

Concepts: AGRICULTURE, CENTRAL LEGISLATURE, MEETINGS, RESOLUTIONS, REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, MEETING REPORTS, PRICE

Control Number: n/a Copy: SINGLE

Sent Date: 18-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am

Decaption Note: Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a

Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am

Disposition Bate: 01-3ar Disposition Event: Disposition History: n/a Disposition Reason: Disposition Remarks:

Document Number: 1977LONDON04519
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00

Drafter: n/a Enclosure: n/a Executive Order: N/A Errors: N/A

Expiration:

Film Number: D770093-0664

Format: TEL From: LONDON

Handling Restrictions: n/a

Image Path:

Secure: 1 Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770346/aaaabnqh.tel

Line Count: 456 Litigation Code IDs:

Litigation Code ios.
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 5809eeb5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc

Office: ACTION AGRE
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED Original Previous Classification: n/a Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 9

Previous Channel Indicators: n/a Previous Classification: n/a Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a

Reference: n/a Retention: 0

Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED

Review Content Flags: Review Date: 12-Oct-2004 12:00:00 am

Review Event:

Review Exemptions: n/a **Review Media Identifier:** Review Release Date: n/a Review Release Event: n/a Review Transfer Date: Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a

SAS ID: 3068181 Secure: OPEN Status: NATIVE

Subject: UK HOUSE OF COMMONS DEBATE ON EC AGRICULTURE PROPOSALS BEGIN SUMMARY: COMMONS DEBATED MARCH 16 EC

TAGS: EAGR, UK, EEC

To: STATE Type: TE

vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/5809eeb5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc

Review Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released **US** Department of State **EO Systematic Review**

Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

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